



Apple Lisa Computer Commentary

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On failure as a part of the game

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By Dominic Gates

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CEO, Ignition, a Seattle venture capital firm
Former Senior VP, Microsoft

Q: What was the biggest failure in your career and what did you learn from it?

Q: I worked at Apple in the early 1980s on the Lisa project. The biggest mistake was that the operating system was the last piece to be integrated. By the time they discovered the problems it was too late to do anything about it; it was one of those 'Oh, shit' moments. I put one of my top programmers on it but it took six months to make it 10 times too slow instead of a hundred times.

It taught me to make the hard decisions early and to do things in smaller pieces: Ship them early, ship them often and learn from those. Battleships are hard to turn, so I like having smaller development projects with nimbler teams.

Biography

Brad Silverberg
Ignition

Mr. Silverberg is currently a founding member of the venture holding firm, Ignition, investing in wireless and other technology start-ups. Mr. Silverberg was a senior vice president at Microsoft, where he served as a member of Microsoft's 9-person Executive Committee, its top decision-making body. Brad ran the Windows business from 1990-1995, and then directed Microsoft's Internet turnaround. Mr. Silverberg was responsible for driving all aspects of the Windows and Internet businesses including establishing the vision and strategy, and executing on product marketing and development. He grew the Windows business from \$50 million to over \$3 billion.

Over his 9 years at the company he managed Windows (versions 3.0, 3.1, 95, and CE), MS-DOS (versions 5 and 6), Internet platform (Internet Explorer versions 1 through 4, Java, Commerce Server, Commercial Internet Server) and Microsoft Office (Office Suite 97). He also was responsible for the developer tools division, the developer relations group, and the web authoring product unit.

In 1998 and 1999, Mr. Silverberg was a strategic consultant for Microsoft president Steve Ballmer. In 1995, for his leadership of Windows 95, Brad was named PC Magazine's Person of the Year.

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